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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, May 1, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "A Message for May Day." Information included from the Parent's Magazine. Approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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May Day today. And, as most people -- especially parents -- know, May Day is Child Health Day.

In the history of the child study and parent education movement, the year 1930 will be recalled as the year when President Hoover called the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection. The President set out to discover the facts about the welfare of American children -- all American children. These facts were to be guides in future programs to aid children. In order to know what needed to be done, however, it was necessary to know what had already been done, what was underway, and what was proposed. More than 1200 men and women, experts in many fields concerned with children, were called in for the conference. Last November they all met for three days in Washington to bring their findings and their ideas, to talk over problems, and to propose new methods and undertakings. The report of surveys and investigations have provided a many-sided and true picture of child life in this country, a picture such as has never before been painted.

One important result of this conference was that it turned the attention of the nation on the subject of children's health and welfare. But this tremendous undertaking will be chiefly valuable if it has made mothers and fathers all over the country realize that the bringing up of their children is not an isolated affair in which they alone are concerned, but rather one on which the life of the nation depends. Because this is so, parents must seek and obtain all the help that experts can give them. They must see that the findings of the White House Conference are put to use to give every child more health, more happiness, more of the good things of life than the children of this country as a whole have ever enjoyed before.

There are many organizations, both national and local, at work today to give parents a helping hand. There are, for example, your own government helpers in Washington. Two that I mention often are the Bureau of Home Economics and the Children's Bureau. And, of course, there is the Public Health Service that extends to health organizations in every State. Then, there are your State colleges, many of them nowadays are putting in new courses in child care and training and adding child guidance specialists to their staffs. Two national organizations I should like to mention are the American Child Health Association and the Child Study Association of America.

No mother or father needs to be behind the times with all the helpful leaflets, books, and magazines being published today which contain information by authorities on all phases of child health, both physical and mental.

I have a message to parents, written some time ago by the Director of the Child Study Association, but so timely just now that I want to celebrate this day by reading it. "Enlightened Parenthood," it is called. I'll read slowly so you won't miss a word of it.

The care and training of children was under discussion. Someone cited the days of our grandmothers and, seen through a pleasant mist of sentiment and imagination, those "good old days" took on the aspect of perfection. Our grandmothers and our great-grandmothers had known how to bring up children. Just by instinct and impulse, by tradition and custom, they raised their large families. Then why all this modern talk of child rearing as a science? Why this increasing body of new information in regard to the child and his welfare?

Now, all sentiment and glamour aside, what are the facts concerning the well-being of the child in "the good old days?" Generations in the past came and went with a fearfully high death rate among infants. Somehow the race survived. One of the most striking achievements of the past quarter of a century is a radical reduction in the infant death rate -- to half, a third, even a quarter of what was formerly accepted as normal. This achievement has resulted altogether through the application of modern scientific knowledge to the physical care of children.

The methods of our parents were, in their days, the best available. Science had not then yielded the facts concerning food and sunshine, contagious diseases and preventive methods that are known today. Now, we would consider hardly short of criminal on the part of parents such disregard of genuine knowledge of feeding and physical care of children.

And what of the intellectual and spiritual development of children? It is generally recognized that "the good old days" ranked high in idealism and aspiration. It is because of this very background of high endeavor that we of today cannot be satisfied with what has gone before; we must go forward in ways of new understanding.

To urge upon all parents careful and systematic study of the needs and nature of children is in no way to disparage the achievements of our parents, or of any parents in the past, who relied largely upon tradition and temperament.

They did the best they could and it was often a devoted and inspired best. We of today would prove unworthy of them if we did not go further and bring to the care of our children the best knowledge that is now available. Every department of life has shown advance and improvement in proportion as it has made use of the methods and results of modern study. The care of children is no exception. Wise parenthood requires more than good will and traditional ideas. It requires understanding based on the studies of experts. It requires

steady application to the task of keeping up with the growth of knowledge as well as with the growth of children. Truly enlightened parenthood must be our goal.

Monday: "A Sunday Morning Breakfast."

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